



THE GYROLOG

THE GYRO CLUB OF EDMONTON

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November 1, 2005

Seventy two Gyros, Gyrettes and guests attended a very special mixed luncheon meeting during Veteran's Week to celebrate the achievements of the veterans in our club specifically, and all veterans in general. We all thank them for what they did for us and all who came after them. We will continue to think about their contributions during the balance of this "Year of the Veteran". During the luncheon **John Ross** read an extensive excerpt from a book detailing what it was like to be a member of a flight crew on a bombing raid into Germany during World War Two. It was a very powerful introduction to the experiences that some veterans survived (and of course, some did not).

In a change from tradition, **President Walter** welcomed us after lunch and **Roger Russell** led us in Cheerio. **Marty Larson** asked the blessing. In recognition of the special day **John Ross** led us in the singing of Oh Canada.

There are two birthdays this month, **Carlyle Ross** on November 13th and **Marty Larson** on November 15th.

Celebrating anniversaries are **John** and **Helen Ross** (42) on November 2nd, **Erik** and **Birgith Hedegaard** (55) on November 7th, **Jack** and **Terri Ellis** (39) on November 19th, **Dick** and **Marilyn Nichols** (42) on November 23rd, and **Harry** and **Irma Nash** on November 30th.

Dick Nichols reported that all but six hockey pool tickets have been sold. Some of the stubs and money have been turned in but he asked that anyone who has not done so get them to him as soon as possible.

David Burnett provided the attached survey related to the Prostate Golf Tournament after 2006. He asks that each Gyro complete it and return it to **Barry Walker** no later than November 15, 2005.

Also attached is the information sent by **Don Greig** about a meeting the Sherwood Park Club is planning for November 30th and to which other clubs in the Edmonton region are invited.

John Ross interviewed our veterans and provided us with their histories.

Peter Fairbridge served 21 years as a professional soldier in the Canadian Armed Forces Army, as a Non-Commissioned Officer and as a Warrant Officer, predominantly as an Infantryman in the "*Black Watch*" *Royal Highland Regiment of Canada*. Peter completed his career as a Paratrooper in the now infamous "Canadian Airborne Regiment", at Griesbach Barracks in Edmonton.

He saw service twice in Germany with NATO forces, and in Norway and Cyprus with the United Nations Peacekeeping Force. Whilst within Canada, he served at Camp Aldershot - Kentville N.S, Camp Gagetown - New Brunswick, Camp Borden - Ontario, at the Officer training school as an instructor, in Churchill Manitoba, plus a chilly winter stint on Baffin Island. As a retired soldier, **Peter** is proud of his service, of the "Military Force" with which he served, and the men with whom he served.

In July 1939, at age 17, **Harry Nash** graduated from Skinners Boys School in the top 2 percent of his class. This almost assured him of a Civil Servants job, and his entrance exam was applied for. In August, he was advised that all entrance exams were cancelled, as they had stopped hiring due the impending war.

Alternately, **Harry** applied for a job with Lloyds bank, and started work September 4th. War was declared on the 3rd.

This young lad lived at his parent's home, 30 miles south of London. This was right in the heart of the war zone, the Battle of Britain. Air raids were frequent. Can you imagine the fear he felt, seeing 500 enemy bombers flying in formation towards him?

One night per week, he was required to stay at work and serve fire-watch duty, protecting the bank. Two nights weekly, he served 'Home-guard' duty. Since **Harry** was an experienced rifleman, he was issued a rifle, but armaments were in such short supply, it was a vintage WWI rifle. His partner's weapon was a 6 foot pole with a scythe tied to the end of it.

July 1941, now age 19, **Harry** entered the Royal Air Force and was trained as an Armorer, responsible for equipping bombers with their payloads. In 1944 Harry was transferred to an elite fighter squadron. Their aircraft were equipped with secret weapons, 8 rail mounted rockets. This squadron was Army support, so they moved constantly as the battle front advanced. Pilots flew as many as 5 sorties per day.

Harry served in England, France, Belgium, Holland and Germany.

Gordon Rennie says that he couldn't find a place to hide, so he signed up for the Canadian Army, Sept 1, 1940 at the age of 28. His initial few months of training were in Edmonton, then Winnipeg. He must have managed to find some time for romancing, as his sweetheart **Ivy** answered "yes" and they were married March 15th, 1941.

The newlyweds traveled to Quebec City, where **Gordon** was temporarily posted as a Weapons Instructor. After just six weeks together he was dispatched to England. It was about this time that they also learned that they were to become parents. **Ivy** returned to Edmonton, and then was blessed with the birth of their daughter **Jean**.

In England, **Gordon** received additional training, and then resumed his position as a Weapons Instructor. His job was to thoroughly train new recruits in the use of many different types of artillery.

Gordon told me of an especially rewarding special assignment he was given during the liberation of Holland, helping with the rehabilitation of the Dutch people.

He was not back to see **Ivy** or his daughter **Jean** for the duration of the war. After 61 months service, he arrived home and was greeted at Edmonton's 9th Street train station, by **Ivy** and their now, almost 5 year old daughter, **Jean**.

Ernie Siegel tells me that he started his military career as a 'Saturday Night Soldier', in Provost Alberta, throughout '39 and '40. He learned that he didn't like walking all that much, also, he says that he didn't like water. So in 1941 when it came time to enlist, he joined the Royal Canadian Air Force.

He graduated from Air Observers School in Edmonton with a Commission, and then went on to Dafoe Saskatchewan, for 1 year, as a Navigation Instructor. In the summer of '42, he boarded the train to Halifax, and then sailed on the Queen Mary to England.

Ernie was posted to several different air bases in England where he completed his Advanced Flying School and Operational Training Unit. **Ernie** was by now 'attached' to the Royal Air Force, as were many young Canadian 'flyboys', to bolster England's terribly depleted ranks.

Ernie became a Navigator Bombardier, flying many secret and very dangerous missions, dropping supplies to the Underground Resistance in France, Norway, Belgium, Holland and Germany. **Ernie** was discharged in August 1945, honorably discharged, he adds!

Bryce Van Dusen enlisted in the Canadian Army in 1942. He and **Florrie** had been married for two years by then and were parents to one young daughter, Francis.

Bryce's training was first in Calgary, then Shilo Manitoba. While in Shilo, **Bryce** received special permission for a very short, 48 hour leave, returning to Edmonton for a quick visit with **Florrie** and to see their newborn baby daughter, Helen.

Then off to Nova Scotia to complete his training, prior to sailing for England. The trip across the ocean was quite an event for this prairie lad. **Bryce** says that he was sea sick nearly all of the way. He was sardined with thousands of other troops, into a very large troop carrier, that changed course every few minutes to avoid German U-boat torpedoes.

After arriving in England to blackouts and buzz bombs, **Bryce** completed his artillery training in Brighton, England, He then served in Belgium, Holland and finally northern Germany, where he received his discharge.

So now, how did this prairie boy get home? You guessed it - by ship. But, this one was so small, and the Atlantic waves so big, that **Bryce** is convinced that they rode the top of the waves all the way back to Canada - nine long days and nights. The train trip from Halifax to Calgary, then into **Florrie's** welcoming arms was jubilation.

Bryce says that he wouldn't want to have to do it again, but on the other hand, wouldn't have missed it.

Owen Cornish was born and raised in Preeceville, Saskatchewan. He says that he always wanted to fly airplanes. At age 18, he joined the RCAF. In March, 1941 **Owen** started his Basic Training at Brandon Manitoba. Next came 6 weeks Initial Training School at U of A, Edmonton, followed by Elementary Flying Training School at Blanchford Field, Edmonton.

Here, **Owen's** flight training was on a deHavalland Tiger Moth, an open cockpit, bi-winged flying machine. In October he moved to Moose Jaw, Saskatchewan for Service Flying Training School. Here, his flight training was in the legendary single-engine Harvard trainer. This was a very exciting time for **Owen**. He loved flying this powerful aircraft. Just before Christmas, on a cold, frosty Moose Jaw winter day, **Owen** received his 'Wings', and the rank of Sergeant Pilot.

After a short visit home for Christmas, he was dispatched by rail to Halifax, then by ship to England. Because of his high marks in Flying School, **Owen** was chosen to be a flying instructor for elementary aircraft. After 23 months as an instructor, he was reassigned, in December 1944, to the RAF Heavy Bomber Command and flew four-engine bombers.

Owen flew twenty-four missions, mostly over Germany, with Bomber Command. He received his discharge in December 1945 with the rank of Flight Lieutenant.

After returning to Canada, **Owen** enrolled for pre-dentistry training in Saskatoon, followed by a move to Edmonton to study Dentistry at U of A, then the only Dental School in Western Canada.

In Sept 1950 he joined the 418 RCAF Reserve Squadron in Edmonton. The Reserve Squadron pay helped to put food on their table. By the time **Owen** graduated from Dentistry in 1954, he had a wife and three children. Talk about being one busy guy! In 1958 **Owen** was promoted to rank of Commanding Officer 418 Squadron, a role he carried until Oct 1961.

Although not a WW II Veteran, **Enid Green** was employed as a secretary in the Operations Section of the Alaskan Wing Air Transport Command for the US Army/Air

Force. For a three year period, beginning in 1942, Enid worked in their Head Office in Edmonton.

Enid's day began at 8AM and during the early years she traveled from home by streetcar to the old Corona Hotel on Jasper Avenue and from there was driven in a Weapons Carrier to the airfield. Her first office was in a Quonset hut, later moving into office facilities located in a hanger built by the US Army/Air Force.

Edmonton was an extremely busy airfield and in 1942 there were more "takeoffs and landings" on this base than in anywhere else in the world. In addition to the DC3's Russian bound cargo aircraft, were of course the American fighter planes, P38's and the P39's. The P38's came to be known as the "Widow Makers", a sad reminder of the times. **Enid** also shared that as their work was often top secret, the contents of all waste baskets were incinerated at the end of each day.

During her career with Air Transport Command, **Enid** worked for many different officers and expressed her satisfaction for this most interesting experience. **Enid** was the recipient of a Good Conduct Medal, resigning from her position prior to the birth of her first child in 1945.

Thanks to the team of **John Ross, Ernie Siegel, and Owen Cornish** for a great program.

UPCOMING EVENTS:

Sharon Lynne-Matei advises that the next Gyrette meeting will be on November 8, 2005. They will have 2 guest speakers from "Touchmark at Wedgewood" who will have an exciting powerpoint presentation of this resort-style retirement community, the first of its kind in Canada. It is located right here in Edmonton and features many life-enrichment choices including fine dining, spas, beauty and barber salons, library, exercise facilities and much more. Additional luxury apartments are already being planned. It promises to be a very enjoyable topic!

President Walter announced that the Gyro Prostate Cancer Sponsorship Appreciation Dinner scheduled for the Faculty Club on Wednesday November 16, 2005 will be cancelled for various reasons. It will be replaced with a luncheon meeting on Tuesday November 15th at the Mayfair. Please make the adjustment in your calendars.

Walter Yakimets has booked the Riverview room at the Shaw Conference Centre for our Christmas party on Tuesday December 6, 2005. The social evening will commence at 6:00 PM with dinner at 6:45 PM. The cost is \$58 per person with wine and \$48 without wine.

The District VIII Interim Convention will be at Fairmont Hot Springs march 17th – 19th 2006.

The Stampede City Club will be hosting the International and District VIII Convention at the Westin Hotel in Calgary from July 20th to July 23rd 2006.

Our Club will be hosting the District VIII Convention in 2007 from August 9 to 12. It will be at the Delta City Centre Hotel on the west end of the City Centre Shopping Centre.

Same Old Bull
Allan

